



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment Hua Hin, Thailand, 7 September 2009

1. Ministers responsible for the environment from ASEAN Member States or their representatives met on the occasion of the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Hua Hin, Thailand on 7th September 2009. The Ministers reviewed on-going programs on environment, particularly on transboundary haze pollution and climate change issues, and discussed future activities to promote regional cooperation.
2. The Ministers noted that the El-Nino which brings about drier weather conditions is expected to strengthen to moderate intensity in the later part of the year. However, with the dry season in the southern ASEAN region expected to end around late October 2009, hotspot activities are expected to gradually ease. The onset of the Northeast Monsoon in late November 2009, which brings about the rainy season, is expected to help subdue hotspot activities. Drier conditions are expected to return gradually to the Mekong sub-region in late 2009 as the Northeast Monsoon sets in. This is likely to lead to a gradual escalation in hotspot activities in the region. The ASEAN Member States pledged to remain vigilant and continuously monitor and implement preventive activities.
3. The Ministers reviewed national, sub-regional and regional activities to address land and forest fires in the region and its associated transboundary haze pollution. The Ministers welcomed the substantive progress in the implementation of concrete on-the-ground activities, especially the outcomes of the Workshop on Peatland Management which was held on 28-29 May 2009 in Songkhla and Narathiwat, Thailand. The Ministers noted that the efforts made by the ASEAN Member States in preventing and controlling land and forest fires have helped to reduce transboundary haze pollution.
4. The Ministers welcomed the implementation of the project on the Rehabilitation and Sustainable Use of Peatland Forests in Southeast Asia. The Project will promote sustainable management and use of the fire-prone peatlands through capacity building, creating alternative livelihood activities, rehabilitation and conservation of important peatland sites, and public awareness and community participation, among others. The Ministers welcomed international and regional collaborative partnerships to support ASEAN's initiatives in addressing land and forest fires, in particular at the fire-prone peatlands.
5. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to Thailand for its proposal to host the Training Workshop on Transboundary Haze Pollution Control tentatively in November/December 2009. The Training Workshop aims to increase the capacity of the AMS officials in fire and haze control.
6. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Asian Development Bank for the useful information on the outcome of ADB's Study on the Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia: A Regional Review, which involved four modeling countries from ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Ministers observed with great concern the projected economic impacts of climate change in Southeast Asia, and recognized the urgent need for stronger inter-governmental policy coordination among various ministries for coordinated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Ministers called for active collaboration with international community to address the climate change issues effectively.

7. The Ministers welcomed the progress of collaborative activities related to climate change, particularly the proposed Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative and the proposed establishment of an ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC) to foster greater regional cooperation on climate change for consideration at their 11th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Singapore in October 2009. The Ministers expressed appreciation to Thailand for its offer to chair the proposed AWGCC. The Ministers also welcomed the commitment of the Governor of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to take the lead on the implementation of “Cool ASEAN, Green Capitals Initiative” which was proposed by the Secretary-General of ASEAN to encourage efforts by the ASEAN Capital cities and other major cities to mitigate climate change through addressing the everyday urban issues such as waste management, energy, and transportation.

8. The Ministers noted the preparations for the Ninth Session of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP 9) and the Seventh Session of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA 7) which will be held on 28 September – 9 October 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Ministers encouraged ASEAN common understanding on climate change issues, and where possible, to engage in joint efforts and common positions on these issues.

9. The Ministers welcomed the proposal from Thailand to recommend to the ASEAN Summit to issue an ASEAN Summit Declaration on Climate Change.

10. The Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General of ASEAN to use his good offices to enable a proactive role for ASEAN on climate change, in line with his mandate, to enhance coordination mechanisms to synergise efforts across the corresponding sectoral bodies and the three Communities on cross-sectoral issues such as climate change.

11. The Ministers will meet again in Singapore on 29 October 2009 during the Eleventh ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment.
